

JESSE TREE

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:.....And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious." Isaiah 11:1&10

It is from this precious verse that the idea of the Jesse Tree originated. Our children are being bombarded with worldly ideas concerning Christmas. Having a Jesse Tree is one way of teaching them and reminding them what Christmas really is.

A Jesse Tree and ornaments tell of Jesus. It is called a Jesse Tree because of the verse in Isaiah 11 telling of how Jesus would come from the root of Jesse, King David's father. There are 20 ornaments, one for each week day, as the Advent Wreath will be used on each of the four Sundays before Christmas.

The making of a Jesse Tree is as individual and unique as your family. Be creative. Choose a branch of your liking. If no branches are available to you, cut one out of paper, paint one on paper, use anything you wish to represent a branch. The branch can be left natural, or painted, or glittered, etc..It can be placed in a container filled with rocks and stones to keep it in place. Once we used a bare root tree as our Jesse Tree. It wasn't hurt at all by being indoors during this time. The container may be covered with Christmas paper, foil, burlap, or surrounded by boughs. The important thing is to make it a fun family project.

Beginning on the first weekday in December, have a member of the family choose an ornament and hang it on the tree. You do not need to pick them in numerical order. This allows everyone to pick their favorite. If possible, let the person who chose the ornament read the verses associated with that ornament. This can be as long or short a time as you want it to be. Shorter is usually better with small children. With older children, the verses may be a launching pad to a much more detailed study and discussion. Just be sure to keep it a fun family time.

The ornaments take you through Scripture, beginning with Adam and Eve and taking you through the time of Jesus' return. They point out how, from the beginning of time, God told of the coming of the Messiah. You will be surprised how quickly children learn the Scriptures using these ornaments. It is also an effective tool of evangelism, as those coming into your home will ask about the ornaments, often asking what each one means.

The ornaments can be made of construction paper, felt, foamies, wood, cross stitch, or any other creative ideas you may have. Some of the cutting on the ornaments is quite intricate and not suitable for a young child to cut out. If you

wish your young children to cut them out, just redesign them in a level suitable to their abilities. Each page of the patterns has a suggested color, but you can do them in any color you wish.

The quickest and easiest ornament material to use is construction paper. You can take the ornament pattern pages to a copy store and have them print the patterns directly on to your construction paper. Make sure they get the right color for each page of ornaments. This preserves your original patterns so you can use them to make more sets when you like. You can also scan the pattern pages into your computer and run the construction paper through your printer. Our family's first set of construction paper ornaments lasted for five years before a couple of them would need to be replaced. In those days before hot glue guns, we had to use needle and thread to sew on loops to hang the ornaments by. Now you can use a hot glue gun to attach thread, ribbon, wire, etc. loops to hang the ornaments by. They can also be embellished with glitter, sequins, beads, or whatever else you can think up. NOTE: Be sure and mark the number of each ornament on the back so you do not forget which ornament goes with which Scripture year after year.

One of the longest lasting materials is the foamie sheets. These are a bit more difficult to make, but can probably last a lifetime. They are a great material for humid areas. We made some for missionaries going to the South Pacific. They said they were great because they survived their extremely humid climate without molding!

To make the ornaments using foamie sheets, you need to make an extra copy of the ornament patterns, because you will not be able to reuse the original ones. Cut around the pattern for each individual ornament, leaving a margin around each one. Pin each ornament to a foamie sheet, placing your pins on the margin area. Cut out the ornament. It is easiest to use smaller, sharp pointed scissors for this job.

On or before December 1st, set up your Jesse Tree and all the ornaments. We like to set our ornaments on a tray covered with pine boughs and then place the tray close to our Jesse Tree. We also wrap the base of our Jesse tree in a pretty material, paper, or foil and add a bow to make it festive. Again, just let your creativity flow.

ADVENT WREATH

To make an advent wreath, all you need is creativity. We have used different methods over the years. You can use a 12 inch round styrofoam block and push regular tapers (12 inch candles) into the styrofoam, placing a white candle in the

center, and four red candles around the outside. Or you can use a different color for the candles if you wish. Then arrange boughs of pine or cedar, or holly branches to cover the styrofoam. Secure boughs in place using florist pins or hair pins. Add small ornaments, ribbon, or berries, etc. for a decorative touch. Or you can use an arrangement of five candlesticks, or any other five candle set up you can think of. One year we cut a log in half, lengthwise, and drilled five holes in the log for the candles. The possibilities are endless and can be suited to any family, income, climate, or taste.

These simple and inexpensive ideas can establish some wonderful Christmas